



New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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SUBJECT: Educational Surrogate Parents

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 1986

REVISED: August 5, 2009

A. **OBJECTIVE**

To establish procedures which ensure that the rights of eligible students, for whom the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Office of Education (OOE) is responsible for Child Study Team services, are protected through the provision of educational surrogate parents in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.2.

B. **STANDARDS**

1. The OOE shall designate Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinators, regionally as needed, to manage the educational surrogate parent volunteer program and implement the applicable procedures in this policy and in the Supervisor of Educational Programs (SEP) and Child Study Team (CST) Case Manager Letters and Forms Manual (SEP/CST Manual).
2. Educational surrogate parent volunteers shall be selected and trained to ensure that each surrogate parent possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to adequately represent the student.
3. Educational surrogate parent volunteers shall be at least 18 years of age, not be employed by or be under contract with the DCF or Department of Education (DOE), and not have any interest that conflicts with those students he/she represents.
4. Educational surrogate parents shall assume all parental rights pertaining to the special education process as set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14 which include notice,

consent, participation in meetings, access to student records and other procedural safeguards.

5. All eligible students shall be assigned an educational surrogate parent, according to the procedures in the SEP/CST Manual, when:
 - a. The parent(s), as defined according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.3, cannot be identified;
 - b. The parent(s) cannot be located after reasonable efforts;
 - c. The parents are deceased and no other legal guardian has been appointed; or
 - d. An agency of the State of New Jersey has legal guardianship of the student, or the student is determined a ward of the state and, if the student is placed with a resource parent, the resource parent declines to serve as the student's parent.
6. If the Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) fails to appoint an educational surrogate parent for a ward of the State, a judge may appoint an educational surrogate parent if the judge determines this is necessary for the student.

C. RECRUITING AND TRAINING EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT VOLUNTEERS

1. The Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) shall conduct vigorous outreach activities to recruit educational surrogate parent volunteers, as needed, to maintain an adequate number of volunteers. These activities may include:
 - a. Placing recruitment flyers in community facilities;
 - b. Distributing flyers at applicable conferences and conventions;
 - c. Establishing linkages with volunteer organizations; and/or
 - d. Conducting outreach to appropriate professional, business and civic groups which provide volunteers.
2. The Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) shall initially meet prospective volunteers to screen, interview, recommend and schedule appropriate candidates for training.
3. Volunteers shall be required to successfully complete the training program provided by the Coordinator(s) which includes dissemination of the "Educational Surrogate Parent Training Materials" identified in Attachment 1 and instruction about:
 - a. The role and function of an educational surrogate parent;
 - b. The overview of State facility education programs operated and contracted by the DCF OOE;

- c. The special education process, including State requirements for notice, consent, evaluation, eligibility, participation in IEP meetings, access to student records, confidentiality requirements and other procedural safeguards;
 - d. Characteristics and educational needs of students by eligibility criteria;
 - e. Approved methods of observation and interaction with students;
 - f. Limiting interaction with students to the defined role of representing the legal rights of the children in the educational process;
 - g. Mileage reimbursement procedures; and
 - h. The process to resolve complaints with the CST Case Manager and/or the Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator.
4. Each volunteer completing the training shall receive a certificate, issued by the OOE, which identifies him/her as a volunteer for the DCF OOE.

D. ASSIGNMENT AND SUPERVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT VOLUNTEERS

- 1. The Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) shall assign the volunteers to eligible students according to the procedures established in the SEP/CST Manual and this policy.
- 2. The Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) shall make reasonable efforts to assign an educational surrogate parent within 30 days of the determination that an educational surrogate parent is needed for a student.
- 3. In certain situations, such as a parent/guardian living out-of-state or being incarcerated, the parent/guardian may be offered the option to give permission to the DCF OOE to appoint a surrogate parent.
- 4. The Coordinator and the CST Case Manager or other educational staff, as appropriate, shall ensure that all required documentation, including the Surrogate Parent Confidentiality Form, is completed pursuant to the procedures in the SEP/CST Manual.
- 5. The Coordinator(s) may contact child study team and OOE fiscal staff, as needed, to ascertain information regarding the volunteers, including reports or communications received and mileage reimbursement information.
- 6. The Coordinator(s) shall monitor appointed surrogate parent volunteers to ensure they adequately perform their duties, have no conflicts of interest and take no action to threaten the well-being of the students.
- 7. An educational surrogate parent shall only interact with the student he/she represents in the presence of educational or residential staff.

8. Concerns or complaints identified by either an educational surrogate parent or by a CST Case Manager shall be addressed by the CST Case Manager, the CST Regional Manager and/or the Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator, as appropriate.
9. If it becomes necessary to dismiss an educational surrogate parent, the reason(s) for dismissal shall be provided in writing to the surrogate parent by the Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator.
10. Educational surrogate parents shall not be replaced without cause.

E. RECOGNITION ACTIVITIES

1. The Educational Surrogate Parent Coordinator(s) may organize and provide appropriate recognition to the volunteers annually or at other intervals. This recognition may include:
 - a. Letters and/or certificates of appreciation, at appropriate intervals, for years of volunteer service;
 - b. Gatherings and meetings, as approved by the OOE Director and/or Deputy Director; and
 - c. Acknowledgement at other volunteer organization meetings as approved by the OOE Director or Deputy Director.

Debra Stewart
Director

Attachment:

[Attachment 1: Educational Surrogate Parent Training Material](#)

<p>Note: This is a reproduction of a signed document. The original document is on file with the DCF Office of Education.</p>
